

SUMMARY OF MEETING ON PRELIMINARY REPORT

ON OVERSEAS ADJUSTMENT STUDY

MAY 10, 1963

The purpose of the meeting was to review a preliminary report of a research study of overseas adjustment problems and to advise on the limitations and significance of the data, relationship to other studies, and additional data which might be gathered and hypotheses which might be tested. This study consisted of two separate parts:

(a) Matched Group Study

Matched groups of secretaries and junior officers in the Foreign Service of the State Department and USIA are being followed over a period of time to determine if the groups screened psychiatrically have fewer problems than those not screened.

(b) Four Year Study

A net was established to identify all adjustment problems occurring among the overseas employees of State, U.S.I.A. and AID which resulted in a significant cost to the employing agency.

The comments related to discussions of the design of the studies, the psychological meaning of "hardship," the variables which might be related to adjustment to overseas conditions, the appropriate use of psychiatric screening, and further studies which might be considered.

It was agreed that the data demonstrated that the overseas adjustment problem is a very serious one but that the present study should be considered only exploratory and that it would be dangerous to try to use it without getting more data. The net in the Four Year Study was not broad enough to identify all the significant problems and the analysis of the "casualties" in both the Matched Group and the Four Year Study was not intensive enough to tease out the significant variables. It was reported that there are many serious problems which are handled by the post, or in the case of dependents, by the family and thus never become a part of the official record. Sociological, job related, and individual psychological aspects of the casualties are not included within the present research design.

A number of questions were suggested for exploration. What characteristics are needed in the person to be able to perform specific jobs in specific environments? Are cultural interests, educational background, early environmental factors (small town, big city, family interests), language facility, etc. of any significance? What is the relevance of size of post, staffing patterns, friendship patterns, supervision, length of time post has been in existence, social climate, etc.? How important are the cross-cultural factors?

When commenting on the finding that there was relatively little relationship between the degree of post hardship and number of casualties, it was agreed that the "hardship" criteria

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used for determining post differentials, may often have little relationship to psychological "hardship." Interpersonal factors are likely to be as important and sometime more important than climate, dangers of injury or disease, adequacy of medical or educational facilities, attitude of local population, etc.

It was pointed out that the finding that the psychiatrically screened group did not have fewer problems than the matched group not given psychiatric screening was consistent with the experience of the Peace Corps. In the beginning all Peace Corps candidates were given psychiatric screening but it was found that the serious problems were picked up also by the selection, training and medical officers. It is now the policy in Peace Corps to limit the psychiatric screening to cases referred because . some indication of trouble is noticed or a special placement problem is being considered.

There was discussion of the finding that the largest number of casualties occurred during the second year overseas and that the rate then started to drop but rose again to a new but lower peak after about ten years overseas. The Peace Corps found resignations peaked during the first and fourth month overseas. However very few of the cases included in their sample meet the criterion for a casualty used in the Four Year Study. It was also pointed out that some studies have shown that job tension tends to peak during middle age and to be lower in the younger and older age groups. The point was also made that the finding that the clerical

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personnel had the greatest difficulty was consistent with national survey data which showed that next to unskilled workers and farmers, clerical workers were least likely to report themselves as being "very happy."

There was some discussion of the relative advisability of treatment near the site of the casualty and treatment in the United States. The military has changed its policy and now handles breakdowns near the place of assignment. This has resulted in salvaging a higher proportion of the casualties

It was recommended that the study be continued and that the sample groups be expanded to include other groups such as AID secretaries and technicians which should be followed over a period of time. Then a great deal more information should be obtained regarding conditions at the posts, job conditions, reasons for drop outs, personal history of casualties, etc. It is also desirable to compare high casualty and low casualty posts, and perhaps specific symptom<sup>\*</sup>ology could be investigated to identify clues as to the dynamics of particular stresses in the environment or in the job.

#### Invited Participants

##### State Department

Bernard Rosen, Deputy Director of Personnel (Unable to attend)  
George Mishtowt, Acting Chief, Medical Division  
Lester Sawyer, Clinical Director  
Dorothea Campbell, Assistant Chief, Employees Relations Branch

##### United States Information Agency

Tony Covins, Assistant Director of Personnel  
Al Schlossman, Personnel Officer

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Agency for International Development

Abe Lerner, Assistant Director for Employee Relations  
Helen O'Connell, Personnel Relations Officer

Peace Corps

Joe Colmen, Director of Research  
Joe English, Chief Psychiatrist  
Ed Henry, Director of Selection (Unable to attend)

Central Intelligence Agency

Staff Psychiatrist

Civil Service Commission

Albert Maslow, Chief, Personnel Measurement Research  
and Development Center (Unable to attend)

Defense Department

Carroll Shartle, Chief, Psychology and Social Sciences  
Division (Unable to attend)

Navy Department

Luigi Petrullo, Head, Group Psychology Branch

Department of Air Force

Henry Duel, Chief, Personnel Research  
Thomas Lisle, Overseas Affairs Officer

National Institute of Mental Health

Leonard Duhl, Psychiatrist, Professional Services Branch

Foundation for Research on Human Behavior

Hollis Peter, Director

DuPont Company

W.R. Bender, Manager, Personnel Relations Section

City University of New York

Mottram Torre, Acting Chairman, Department of Student Services

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Research Staff

Regis Walther, Research Program Officer  
Jean Intermaggio, Psychologist  
Vera Vinogradoff, Psychologist  
Catherine Bachman, Research Assistant

Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs,  
Syracuse University

Gerard J. Mangone, Executive Assistant to the Dean  
(Unable to attend )